# INVESTMENT OR LIABILITY:

## HOW ORGANISATIONS VIEW

## & IMPLEMENT

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

By

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Research project submitted in partial completion of the
Diploma in Career Counselling,
Wellington Institute of Technology, 2002

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have been possible without the support of a great number of people.

Special thanks to the HR and line managers in the contributing organisations for their willing participation.

Grateful thanks to my lecturer, Sue Mortlock for your support, encouragement and direction.  Thanks also to Julie Thomas, for your encouragement and inspiration and especially to my supervisor, Lesley Shaw, for your input and ability to keep me nearly sane during this project.

Humble thanks to my family and friends who have not only tolerated this intrusion into my life, but have also been a constant support.

## INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

My work in an organisation that provides Employee Assistance programmes to a wide variety of organisations has given me the impression that there is some level of reluctance within organisations to invest in the career development of their staff.

I wanted to discover whether there is a place for external career practitioners to assist organisations with their staff career development.

To gain greater understanding of this issue, I set a questionnaire that endeavoured to explore the four following themes:

- How organisations view / define career development;
- To what extent organisations link their career development to their training and development strategy and even further into their wider organisational strategy;
- To what extent career development is being used within organisations;
- Whether there is a role for external career consultants in working alongside organisations in staff career development?

## METHODOLOGY:

In order to test my observation, I decided on the following methodology:

a)     Literature Search

b)     A qualitative survey of two organisations from each of the three main business sectors (ie. state, private, not-for profit).  My sample size for this research was to be one HR Manager and two line managers from each organisation; a total of 6 HR managers and 12 line managers.

c)     Each organisation was personally approached, and having got 'buy-in' from the appropriate people, sent my questionnaire (Appendix 1) and Research Contributor Introductory Letter (Appendix 2) to the HR Manager and two line managers from each organisation.  I received a 100% response rate.

d)     Each participant was assured confidentiality and in order to satisfy ethical requirements, I requested all respondents to complete and return a 'Consent to Participate' form (Appendix 3).

e)     A taped interview to clarify issues / comments in the survey was also raised as a possibility.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Theme 1:  What Is Career Development?**

The understanding of career development has changed as the world of work as changed.  In considering the historical concept of career, I found a tendency to focus on paid employment, expectations of occupational 'up-ward' advancement and anticipated long-term employment loyalty (Humphries and Gatenby, 1999, Pg 1).

There appears to be as many definitions of career development / career management, as there are individuals: in organisations, in some form of management, or working as career practitioners.   The terms 'career development' and 'career management' tend to be used interchangeably in current literature.

The term 'career development' as used by some researchers and authors in the field has been seen as a broader, more encompassing term than that of 'career management', which is perceived as being quite narrow in its definition.  For example, Hirsh & Jackson define the difference as follows:

> "We distinguish career management, what the organisation
> does to try and develop its employees in line with business
> needs, from career development, which is defined more widely
> as covering the things people do for themselves as well as those
> that are done for them." (Hirsh & Jackson, 1996, Pg 5)

Paul Stevens points out that career development can mean different things to those working in organisations.

From an **employee's perspective**, it can mean:  performing well in their current job, showing commitment and interest in personal growth, assessing goals, choices and abilities so as to determine their career goals, matching their goals with organisational needs, planning for development and increased well-being.

From a **line manager's perspective**, career development can mean:  matching an employee's skills and interests to their organisation's needs, conducting performance and personal development discussions, delegating work, training & education, and providing a mentoring / coaching role to their employees.

To **executive management** within the organisation, it can mean:  developing the long-term capabilities of the organisation in accordance with its direction and strategic plan, being aware of employee development concerns, and providing resources and implementing systems.  (Stevens, 1993, p. 12)

For the purposes of this research, I am choosing to work from the understanding of the term 'career development' as described by Simonsen & by Tracey below.

Simonsen views career development as:

> "… an ongoing process of planning and directed action toward personal work and life goals.  Development means growth, continuous acquisition and application of one's skills.  Career development is the outcome of the individual's career planning and the organisation's provision of support and opportunities, ideally a collaborative process… The purpose of career development systems is to ensure the best fit possible between the individual's interests, skills, values, needs and work preferences and the requirements of the position, work unit, and organisation…. Increasingly, organisations are viewing career development as a means of linking individual goals to business needs." (Simonsen, 1994)

This is closely aligned to the definition provided by Tracey, 1991 that Jackson used in her book *Career Development* in 2000 as:

> "The process of assessing, aligning and balancing organisational and individual needs, capabilities, opportunities and challenges through multiple approaches and methods.  It emphasises the person as the individual who performs, configures and adapts various work roles.  Its major intervention is self-assessment and developmental processes that affect individual and organisational abilities to generate optimal matches of people and jobs."

It appears that internationally the definitions outlined above have remained reasonably consistent and valid for the last decade and also seem to fit the New Zealand current environment.

**Theme 2: The Importance of Linking Career Development to Wider Organisational Strategy**

Simonsen indicates that links between career development and an organisation's wider strategy are important in the statement, "One of the purposes for implementing a career development system is to ensure that employees' goals, managers' support, and organisational systems align with business needs." (Simonsen, 1997, p. 8)

Stevens identified 3 basic questions an organisation needs to address when considering a career development programme:

- What do we want in a career development programme?
- What do we already have within our HR development programme?
- What is it realistic for us to deliver on?

I found that there was agreement by researchers and authors with regard to where the balance of responsibility lay for career development within organisations. Historically, the responsibility for an individual's career lay almost solely with the organisations to which the individual was employed. In more recent years, however, the pendulum swung to the opposite extreme whereby organisational career processes tended to center too much on individual responsibility. This move often resulted in higher staff turnover and a perceived lack of loyalty. From an organisational perspective this was also "seen by some as:

- insufficiently linked with the skill needs of the business;
- difficult to implement successfully;
- not necessarily providing the required development for key groups." (Hirsh & Jackson, 1996, p.13)

Within the last decade or so, there has been a gradual move internationally to bring the pendulum to more of a middle ground resulting in more of a 'partnership' approach to career development. "This shows in career development processes being further adapted to meet both organisational and individual needs". (Hirsh & Jackson, 1996, p. 3)

Research by Gutteridge, Leibowitz & Shore (1993) shows that from an organisational perspective, investing in career development is much more effective if it is shaped by the business needs of the organisation. However,

this requires organisations to recognize career development as a business 'necessity' that should be cultivated for longevity rather than as a short-medium term or 'nice-to-have' measure. This, in turn, produces a direct relevance to an organisation's competitive advantage and bottom line while meeting present and future requirements with a well-trained and motivated workforce.  Blake-Palmer (1995) further supports this view stating:

> "It can be difficult to quantify the payback from career
> development in strict business terms, but the effect
> of ignoring it will feed through to a company's bottom
> line.  Organisations can't be surprised if there
> is a drop-off in individual's commitment and motivation."

Hirsh & Jackson, 1996 further support this view by stating that:

> "Career development is an important issue for
> organisations.  By attracting, retraining and developing
> its workforce, an organisation achieves the resilience
> that is required to survive in an increasingly turbulent
> business environment…   Successful career development
> practice is therefore designed to give an organisation
> competitive advantage in attracting, retraining and developing
> the best people."

"When individuals plan their careers in concert with overall business strategy and direction, the resulting win-win alignment can produce significant gains for both parties". (Gutteridge, Leibowitz & Shore, 1993, p. 190)

**Theme 3:   Career Development Programmes Within Organisations**

Several key factors have been identified as necessary to ensure an effective career development programme within an organisation:

*Sustainable career development strategies:*
For career development strategies to be sustainable there needs to be significant alignment between the employment / relationship offer and the development offer (Hirsh & Jackson, 1996, p.2).

*Substantial support by senior management:*
Jackson (2000) suggests a successful career development programme requires continued high visibility and on-going communication about an organisation's career development processes from 'the top'.   Jackson considers there is insufficient support of career development programmes by top management. However, this must be coupled with realistic timeframes in order to achieve positive outcomes (Stevens, 1993, p.19).

*Line Manager 'Buy-In' & Participation:*
Gutteridge, Leibowitz & Shore (1993) state there is a need to get line manager 'buy-in' and participation to a comprehensive career development programme. Making line managers accountable for staff development will assist in ensuring the positive effects able to be gained will be sustained over time.

Thomas, in some recent New Zealand research has noted, however, that few supervisors / managers feel equipped to hold career development discussions with their employees and, in fact, don't consider that employee career development is 'part of their job'.   Although, at the same time, these same managers acknowledge that career development enhances employee job performance (Gutteridge et al, 1993, p. 65).  Megginson and Clutterbuck state that, "staff appraisal or development are often not done at all or with reluctance, under pressure and late" (1995, pg. 23).
The literature review showed some varying viewpoints as to where the role of manager starts and stops when it comes to the career development of staff. Simonsen considers coaching and guidance to be the primary responsibility of the manager, stating that they need to be trained to have development discussions with their staff, but not to be career counselors.  Thomas (2002)

suggests that this would put the manager in the position of acting as a referral agent or a liaison person.

There has been a perception that employees lack the motivation to participate in career development programmes.  Stevens, however, indicates that "the issue in career development is not the motivation of employees to participate in the process, but the identification and selection of appropriate techniques and procedures to help them." (Stevens, 1993, p. 3)

Stevens goes on to say that "employees need help with their career planning responsibility.  Career planning training helps them:
- to analyse their interests, values, goals and capabilities;
- to consider available options;
- to make decisions relating to their current job;
- to establish personal development plans that are likely to bring the results they merit and, in turn, benefit the employer." (Stevens, 1993, p. 10)

Gutteridge et al (1993) state that an effective career development programme:
- takes into account the varying learning styles and preferences of individuals,
- considers the different work sites / conditions staff work in,   &
- offers an array of tools and activities able to be accessed by employees.

So what constitutes a career development programme?  Jackson (2000) highlights the core functions as:

| | |
|---|---|
| • self-help packages<br>• appraisal<br>• $360°$ feedback<br>• development centres<br>• job maps<br>• competence<br>• information interviews<br>• career-planning courses<br>• career workshops<br>• vacancy system | • career counselling<br>• mentoring<br>• PDPs<br>• software, learning centres<br>• education & training<br>• networking<br>• secondments<br>• succession<br>• lateral moves |

This seems by no means to be a definitive list.  However, most researchers and authors accept the above list as core to a career development programme.

One size clearly does not fit all.

Much discussion surrounds the linking of career development with other HR structures, eg. performance appraisals, competencies, succession planning, compensation & job posting.  Jackson (2000) encourages organisations to be careful about the interventions that they put in place as many organisations still run what can be perceived as competing HR agendas.

One of the four main benefits Stevens (1993) considers to an organisation having a career support system is that of improved performance management. Here, Stevens highlights the role of the boss as coach / mentor as opposed to career counsellor and separates out performance review from discussions on career future.   Staff may well be somewhat reluctant to talk openly and honestly about their career future and developmental needs if they perceive it may disadvantage them when it comes to performance-related pay.

Stevens (1993) states that the results of the implementation of effective career development support shows:

- improved use and allocation of resources based on better information,;
- more effective human resources and performance review processes with greater level of confidence in these processes;
- greater person-job 'fit';
- jobs are re-structured mutually;
- restored morale of 'survivors' of downsizing;
- greater accommodation of a flatter structure;
- effective management of dysfunctional behaviours;
- increased productivity of staff;
- decreased attrition;
- greater knowledge of staff capabilities leading to a reduced need for outside sourcing of employees;  and
- more effective outplacement services for staff wanting a change in career.

All researchers and authors suggest that fewer 'well-resourced' interventions, properly supported & sustained are likely to be more effective than having a large number of under-resourced interventions available.

**Theme 4:  The Place For Career Practitioners In Organisations**

While it maybe desirable and necessary to involve line-managers in developing the careers of their staff, Jackson (2000) also suggests that organisations consider using external consultants, in particular:

- where there is limited internal expertise;
- where confidentiality is deemed important.

Simonsen says,

"the role of career advisors is not to replace
managers in developing employees;  rather it
is to supplement and offer more in-depth
assessment assistance than can reasonably be
expected of managers.  In addition, they can provide
a broader perspective than most managers,
whose expertise is largely confined to their own units,
and can also provide access to resources about
opportunities in the company as a whole.  Managers
provide support and opportunities for growth.  Their
role is to coach and provide feedback about performance
on the present job and advise and provide opportunities
to achieve goals.  Career advisors provide unbiased
assistance to individuals for career planning within
the organisation.  Their role is to provide assessment
interpretation, counselling, feedback, advising, access
to resources, mediation and decision support".
(Simonsen, 1997, p. 142 & 143)

Jackson (2000) suggests that external consultants can be brought into organisations at any or all of the following stages of development:

- auditing current needs and availability;
- design of an appropriate career development programme;
- provision of specialist services;  and
- evaluating the programme.

In order for external practitioners to work effectively within organisations, Gutteridge, Liebowitz & Shore (1993) highlight the need for the external practitioners to understand the organisation's culture and business needs. It is only when this happens that the needs of both parties can be met.

Simonsen adds to this by stating: "a resource who is not an employee and has no loyalty to or political connections with the company is thus potentially less threatening to employees". She goes on to add, "a contractor needs training and orientation to the business needs and organisational information" (Simonsen, 1997, pg. 143).

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 1.      How Organisations View / Define Career Development

The first question asked, was "What is your view of what career development consists of?"

There was a mixed response to this question.  Of the 6 HR managers surveyed, 3 identified a need to link career development with their organisation's benefit & needs.  They saw this as being achieved primarily through self-analysis or assessment, open conversation, setting objectives, assisting employees to identify the competencies needed for their current job, identifying aspirations for future jobs and providing opportunities to enable employees to achieve their stated aspirations and direction.

The other 3 viewed this from the perspective of furthering job prospects through training and setting goals and assisting staff to reach their potential both within their current organisation and the wider job market.

Likewise the line-managers gave a mixed response to this question.
Of the 12 surveyed, 3 of the line managers identified a need to link career development with company initiatives / organisation's benefit & needs.  They perceived the way to do this was through growing technical and business skills, succession planning, appropriate matching of individuals to roles, provision of appropriate training, formal and informal feedback, and mentoring.

6 line managers, identified career development as an individual responsibility. 3 viewed career development as a 'joint' responsibility, however, it was still focussed on the individual's needs without any apparent consideration of the needs of the organisation.

It was interesting to note that 3 of the organisations (spread across all three sectors) linked the career development of individuals with the organisations' needs/benefits.

The other significant thing to note was that there was no consistent message of what career development was or consisted of within any organisation or in fact, across any particular sector.

How does this fit with current literature?  There are two main things that are worth noting:

a) It appears some organisations have taken on board the gradual change to a more 'collaborative' approach when it comes to linking company initiatives with career development.  However, it seems there is still some way to go.

b) My research would indicate that the perception Paul Stevens (1993) has of the levels of understanding of 'career development' at various levels within an organisation is consistent with the current New Zealand experience.

## 2. The Link Between Career Development and Organisational Strategy

Questions 2-4 inclusive of the Survey Questionnaire (Appendix 1) formed the basis to understanding to what extent organisations link career development to wider organisational strategy.

### 2.1 Career Development Link to Training and Development Strategy

4 out of the 6 HR managers and 8 of the 12 line managers identified a definite link between career development and their organisation's training and development strategy.

My general observations are that in this study, half the organisations demonstrated a common understanding between HR managers and line managers as to where career development fits within the wider training and development strategy of the organisation.

It was interesting to note that in this study, the not-for-profit sector was the one sector where there is common understanding between HR and line managers of the link between career development and wider training and development strategy.

When asked to describe how career development was linked to their training and development strategy, there were a variety of responses.  For HR managers, the link was primarily in the form of:

- Availability of on-line training to supplement career development;
- Staff funded for external qualifications that are valued by the organisation and increase staff member's marketability;
- Identifying training needs for groups of employees and arranging training opportunities;
- Linking processes for obtaining some external training;
- Part of performance management system is that line managers discuss career pathways with staff, record aspirations, and take that into account in development initiatives.

Line manager responses described the link as being primarily through individual / personal development plans.

- One respondent, a line manager, that recorded there was no link, made some interesting comments which can be found in Appendix 4.


### 2.2    Training & Development Link to Organisational Strategy

HR managers within 5 out of 6 organisations stated there was a definite link. However, when it came to line managers, 6 of the 12 consider there is a link. One line manager commented that, "the organisation's HR strategy isn't well known throughout the organisation".

How training & development was linked to wider organisational strategy tended to be expressed by HR managers in conceptual terms, as opposed to the line managers who expressed the link in terms of practical outworking

For those line managers that indicated there was no link, the following comments were worthy of note:
- As line manager, my training and development programme is linked to the job at hand.  I'd also support courses staff are interested in if I felt it would provide benefit for the organisation as well.
- At our organisation, it is a matter of luck or whom you impress.

Once again, I noted that in this study the not-for-profit sector was the one sector that showed a consistency of response where everyone understood or acknowledged the link.


### 2.3    The Link Between Training And Development And Business Plans

3 of the 6 HR and line managers indicated that individual training and development is in their business plan.  However, it was worth noting that these responses didn't necessarily correlate with each other.

In two organisations was there consistency between responses, ie. where the HR manager and line managers agree.  Respondents from one not-for-profit sector organisation all acknowledged the link; and in one state sector organisation all respondents acknowledged there was no link.

In the other 4 organisations, there was no consistency between HR and line managers (or even between line managers).

Comments from one organisation were:
- "There is no business plan";
- "There is no link, but there should be".

## 2.4    Budget For Individual Career Development

5 out of 6 HR managers said yes, however one respondent specifically aligned this to training.

Of the line managers, 8 said there was a budget set aside on an on-going basis.  3 of the 4 line managers who indicated there was no budget set aside on an on-going basis made mention that there was finance available for training.

3 organisations had a consistency of response between HR and line managers.  Again, this was both not-for-profit organisations and 1 state sector organisation.

## 2.5    Financial Policy On Staff Career Development

When asked to "describe their financial policy on staff career development", HR managers gave a variety of responses, the details of which can be found in Appendix 5.

There is great variation in what organisations are committed to paying for, eg. exam fees, recognized external training, affiliation fees to professional organisations, conference fees, etc.  However, as a general observation within this survey, it was evident that line managers are not very familiar with their organisation's financial policy on staff career development.

## 2.6 *Time Spent Weekly On Both Personal And Staff Career Development Activities*

**HR Managers:**

Most HR managers spent 0-2 hrs maximum per week on their own personal development and 1-4 hrs per week on staff development. Two managers do not spend any time at all on a weekly basis on staff development.

**Line Managers:**

There was a great variation in responses with responses ranging from 0-12 hrs per week (with a median of 3.5 hrs per week) spent on personal development.

There was an even greater variance when it came to how much time line managers spent on their staff development. A range of 2-25 hrs per week was recorded, with a median of 4 hours per week.

CONCLUSION:

The difference in responses between the HR and line managers suggests that there are significant challenges for organisations with getting their strategy or 'ideals' into practice. This challenge seemed to be primarily demonstrated by apparent gaps in communication and in a lack of an integrated approach to resourcing.

Results would also indicate a variation in how far organisations recognize career development as something the literature search would deem as a 'business necessity'.

There is an indication that the not-for-profit sector organisations are more likely to have better integrated organisational strategy and practice. This raises a further question as whether this is due to:

a) their stated commitment to career development as an alternative to large / market salaries;  and / or
b) their organisational values.

## 3. Career Development Use Within Organisations

Questions 4a-8d inclusive of the Survey Questionnaire (Appendix 1) formed the basis to understanding to what extent career development is being used within organisations.

### *3.1    Participation in Career Development:*

All respondents except one said their organisation encouraged people to participate in career development.

However, when asked to describe how their respective organisations encouraged people to participate in career development, I noted that all organisations listed core functions of their development programme.  Each organisation had a variety of tools they were using, however in-house training and annual performance appraisals including personal development programmes, were by far the most common.  A summary of additional tools can be found in Appendix 6.

Of particular note, were the following comments:

All respondents in one organisation made it quite clear that career development is "individually owned".  However, one person mentioned career development as a 2-way process.

Two respondents mentioned "clear financial reward for career development". One respondent went on to add, "I haven't been made aware of any negative impact on salary or bonus increases if courses not done, but I do believe they are coming."

One respondent mentioned having weekly / fortnightly performance meetings.

The mentoring programme mentioned by one respondent also noted that it "broke down in a year due to no follow-through….  The standard of mentoring was poor".

Comment was made that there is no follow-up to ensure there is a career development plan or anything else has been done to fulfil the plan.  Neither was there any follow-up to ensure the courses are completed.

Mostly there was across-the-board understanding of the tools used / available within each individual organisation.

Although most respondents indicated their organisation does encourage staff to participate in career development, the following statements were recorded as concerns:

One respondent stated that their "organisation does not consider it [career development] important and does not add value - in the short term". They went on to comment that, "it is a dysfunctional organisation, we are the market leader… fat and happy!"

One respondent commented they had a "lack of resources - time to put into this and money to fund it". Further concerns were that "staff with high qualifications will be enticed away by competitors for more pay". There was also recognition of "a need to focus training funding very closely on organisational need".

One other respondent commented that in their "experience people are just too busy to think about it, let alone to get time away to actually go on a course or attend a seminar".

### 3.2 Is Investing In Career Development Good For Your Business?

Other than one respondent stating "yes and no", all other respondents were clear that it was good for the business to invest in staff career development.

### 3.3    Advantages Of Assisting Staff With Career Development Plans

The main advantages expressed by both HR and line managers were:

- Increased motivation;
- Staff retention; and
- Increased morale.

The majority of line managers also listed the following advantages:

- Increased loyalty & commitment (both ways);
- Improves the quality of their work;
- Increased productivity / performance.

HR Manager and Line Managers recorded other advantages of assisting staff with career development plans, as can be seen in table Appendix 7.

One line manager commented, "We need our good people to stay.  They are an investment and we need to be able to offer them a career plan that will help them stay in the company.    There is no identification with a company anymore."  She went on to say that, "leaving career development as the sole responsibility of the individual is only doing half the job".

### 3.4    Disadvantages Of Assisting Staff With Career Development Plans:

The survey listed 9 objections to assisting staff with a career development plan and respondents were asked to rate them on a 1-9 scale with 1 = most valid reason;  9 = least valid reason.

I discovered that the most valid reasons for not assisting staff with career development were:

*We can't afford to have staff members away from their role/team for 'x' period of time* (cited as a very significant concern for 5 out of the 6 HR managers and 7 out of the 12 line managers).

*Fear we'll train people up only to have them leave* (with 3 HR managers and 4 line managers scoring 3 or less on the scale). This attitude seems most prevalent in organisations where their career development is not linked to their business needs / strategy.

*We (the organisation) do it for them through on-the-job training and internal courses. We give them what they need* (with 2 out of 6 HR managers rating this as their primary concern).

*Staff may become more dissatisfied* was rated as a concern by 4 line managers, but 1 out of the 6 HR managers.

### OTHER PERCEIVED DISADVANTAGES

Half of both HR and line managers didn't perceive any other disadvantages of assisting staff with a career development plan.

The additional disadvantages perceived by HR and line managers can be found in Appendix 8.

### 3.5 Personal Career Development Plans

5 out of 6 HR managers said they do have a plan, whereas 6 of the 12 line managers have career development plans.

When asked how they arrived at them, 3 out of the 5 HR managers indicated they'd developed them themselves, 1 had developed theirs in association with their line manager, and 1 individual's plan had been developed by their line manager.

Of the 6 line managers that have plans, 4 out of the 6 indicated they'd developed them themselves and 2 had had them developed in association with their line manager.

### 3.6 Responsibility For Setting Career Development Plans

5 out of 6 HR managers and 8 out of 12 line managers agreed that the responsibility for setting career development plans should lay with the individual in association with their line manager. 1 HR manager and 2 line

managers thought it was the responsibility of the individual and 2 line managers said it should be the organisations line manager's responsibility.

## 3.7 Key People Responsible For Ensuring Career Development Implementation

4 out of 6 HR managers and 5 out of 12 line managers said there were key people responsible in their organisations for ensuring career development implementation.

Of those who said there were key people, there was no agreement as to who that person is.  4 line managers said it was the organisation (HR / Training & Development), 1 said it was the line manager's responsibility and 1 said it was self in association with their line manager.

Of the 5 line managers who said there were key people, 1 said it was the organisation (HR / Training & Development), 3 said self in association with their line manager and 1 said self as employee / line manager / training & development – depending on the rank of the staff member.

Of those who indicated there weren't any key people responsible for ensuring career development implementation, there was still no agreement as to who they consider should carry that responsibility.

Of the 7 line managers, 4 said self in association with line manager, 2 said line manager and 1 said, "I would have said self in association with line manager, but often the line manager doesn't know the full scope of what is available.  I don't really see it as an HR function as they are removed from the detail involved in each job".

## 3.8 Training And Support For Those Responsible For Implementing Career Development

It was clear that there was very little structured training to assist managers in implementing career development.

One private sector organisation had understanding between all respondents of support provided.

A full list of HR Manager and line manager responses can be found in Appendix 9.

### 3.9    Implementation Process

Of the 6 organisations surveyed, one respondent stated, their "organisation doesn't have one [implementation process]".  One respondent said, their "organisation's processes are currently being developed".  Of the other 4 organisations, each HR manager was able to articulate the process, however, it appeared not well known or understood by the line managers.

CONCLUSION:

It is evident that all organisations provide career development opportunities for their staff.  It was also found that organisations use quite a wide variety of tools (refer Appendix 6) in order to achieve staff development, although with varying 'success'.

The responses to this set of questions raises uncertainty as to why some respondents recognize their responsibility for ensuring they have personal career development plans, yet don't have one.  The survey data doesn't answer this, but clearly this is a key issue for understanding gaps between what organisations offer and what employees achieve in career development.

Responses also indicate managers can have competing / conflicting agendas / responsibilities which results in career development being somewhat ineffective.

It appears that organisations generally are not resourced very well time-wise to allow staff to undertake career development.  Again, this highlights the gap between the 'ideal' and the practice.

Points 3.6-3.9 indicate that identification of responsibility for career development implementation within organisations is not often clear or that communication about it is dysfunctional.  Once again, this highlights the gap between the 'ideal' and the practice – the concept may be known, but the outcomes are hindered by lack of clear resourcing.

**4.    Is There A Place for Career Practitioners In Organisations?**

Questions 9-9c inclusive of the Survey Questionnaire (Appendix 1) formed the basis to understanding whether there is a place for career practitioners in organisations.

*4.1    Whether Organisations Have Considered Using External Career Practitioners*

3 line managers and no HR managers had considered using external career practitioners to assist in the implementation of an effective career development programme.

Those that said they had considered using them, saw career practitioners could assist them in the following ways:

- "I think they'll have a broader and more informed view of career opportunities or they know the right questions to ask and where to go for an answer.  As a line manager, we're very amateur and inexperienced in the knowledge we can offer.  We're restricted to what we know, therefore I'd consider using an external career practitioner."

- "Impartiality and seeking best value for money."

- "Developing some generic training modules for all policy analysts / public servants / other generic functions."

The HR managers that said they hadn't considered using external career practitioners, said they'd consider using them for the following reasons:

- "Only for redundancy / poor performance / poor motivation, as currently.  Plus for development of management and professional staff."

- "We are a small organisation and everyone is stretched.  Would want to know whether this would add sufficient value / make sufficient positive impact to be worth the cost."

The line managers said they'd consider using career practitioners for the following reasons:

- "I believe individuals make our organisation what it is. Anyone who can help with career development would be an asset."

- "Professional expertise of outside person. Also more likely to make time to see an external person – it's too easy to cancel if it's an internal person."

Two line managers were unsure what the role of the external career practitioner would be.

One line manager stated their "organisation has a unique culture and mission that makes it unlikely they'd find an external practitioner that could meet their needs better and more cost effectively than internal resources".

### 4.2 The Advantages & Disadvantages To The <u>Organisation</u> Of Using Career Practitioners

A full list of both the **Advantages** and **Disadvantages** to the Organisation of using career practitioners can be found tabled in Appendix 10 & 11.

ADVANTAGES:

*HR Managers:*
- Professional objectivity and competence;
- Assisting staff facing career change / career dissatisfaction;
- Staff retention;
- More consistent attention paid to career development.

*Line Managers:*
- Professional objectivity and competence;
- Establishment of customised programme;
- Staff retention;
- Remedial focus.

**DISADVANTAGES:**

The most common concern was cost.  Other issues cited as most significant were:

*HR Managers:*
- Fear that line managers would abrogate their responsibility;
- External advisor's lack of knowledge of the organisation's opportunities, needs, and culture.

*Line Managers:*
- Fear of losing good staff.

### 4.3    Advantages & Disadvantages To The <u>Individual </u>Of Using Career Practitioners

There was pretty much a consistency of thought between all respondents regarding the **advantages** to the individual.  These included:

| | |
|---|---|
| • Objective / independent view<br>• Competency<br>• Confidentiality<br>• Give individual growth & goals<br>• Greater focus<br>• Realistic assessment of skills<br>• Shows commitment from org. | • Impartial<br>• Well qualified<br>• A good sounding board<br>• More coherent formalized plan<br>• Less chance of taking on wrong job<br>• Wider perspective<br>• Tailored to individual |

One other comment of note was:  "external career practitioner doesn't get mixed up with any issues in the relationship between manager and staff member".

**Disadvantages:**

8 out of 18 respondents didn't identify any disadvantages to the individual. Most perceived disadvantages were of a similar nature to those disadvantages perceived for the organisation. Of particular note were the following comments:

- "It may unsettle individuals if they feel they can't implement strategies due to personal circumstances."

- "If individual is not identified for advancement, they may give up."

- "Frustration if they don't see how their goals can fit within organisational goals."


CONCLUSION:

Once again, I question what effect having clearly defined and communicated values that are integrated into an organisation's policies and strategy has on staff career development and retention. However, this was outside the scope of this project.

There appears to be a gap in HR manager perceptions and understanding of where the responsibility of line managers starts and finishes in regard to the career development of their staff.

## EVALUATION:

For a 6,000-word assignment, the scope of the project was a little too ambitious, however, I wanted this research to be of real value. I believe this would have been of greater value as a thesis or more in-depth research project.

Greater value could have been gained if more organisations in each sector and a greater sample of staff within each of those organisations had been surveyed.

If further research was done on this topic, it would be useful for respondents to give a definition of what 'training' consists of. I suspect individuals have not made a clear delineation between training and development and career development.

This research has also raised further thought with regard to organisational values and how these impact attitudes towards career development.

An option to carry out a taped interview to clarify issues / comments in the survey was also part of the scope of this project. I felt the information gained was more than sufficient for the scope of this project, so I decided not to follow-up any respondents.

## CONCLUSION:

Current literature gives a good picture of what is needed within organisations to ensure career development programmes are effective, but the survey of these organisations indicates there are some gaps.

As a whole, I don't believe that organisations are viewing career development as an investment that will result in a 'win-win' situation for *both* the organisation and the individual.

Although all organisations engage in some form of career development. Most organisations demonstrated a failure to address the underlying need to get career development policies and strategies integrated into their business plans / structure, resulting in significant under-resourcing. It is not until this integration has been done and communicated to all levels of management, that conflicting / competing agendas can be resolved and what is presently 'ideal' can be effectively outworked in practice.

Although all organisations seem to have a long way to go, the not-for-profit sector certainly appeared to have a greater understanding of the need to align career development with organisational strategy.

The perception gained from this research shows that the strategic planning around career development isn't done in a coherent way. This tends to reflect a lack of understanding of the careers industry and what career practitioners can offer organisations.

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# &

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# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1:**

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE:

THANK YOU FOR GIVING APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS. YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED IN CONFIDENCE.

Please return to Claire Pearce in the attached self-addressed envelope by: **[date]**

Please indicate type of organisation you are currently involved in:

State sector ☐

Private sector ☐

Not-for-Profit ☐

Please indicate your current role:

HR Manager ☐

Line Manager ☐

*In answering any of the following questions, if you need more space, please use the pages at the back of this questionnaire.*

1.	What is your view of what career development consists of?

	_____

	_____

	_____

2.    Is career development linked to your training and development strategy?                          Yes / No

2a.    If **yes**, please describe how

_____

_____

If your answer to Question 2 is **no**, please give reasons

_____

_____

_____

3.    Is your training and development linked to a wider organisational or HR strategy?    Yes / No

3a.    If **yes**, please describe how

_____

_____

_____

If **no**, please state reasons

_____

_____

3b.     Is individual training and development in your business plan?
        Yes / No

3c.     Do you set aside a budget on an on-going basis to support
        individual career development?              Yes / No

3d.     Please describe your financial policy on staff career development.

        _____

        _____

        _____

4.      As per your definition of career development (in Question 1
        above), please state how much time you spend weekly on both
        personal and staff career development activities?

        Personal: _____Staff: _____

4a.     Does your organisation encourage people to participate in career
        development?                              Yes / No

4b.     If yes, please describe how is this encouraged

        _____

        _____

        _____

        _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

4c.   If your organisation **doesn't** actively encourage people to have a career development plan, what do you consider is/are the reason(s) for this?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.      Do you believe it is good for your business to invest in the career development of your staff?      Yes / No


5a.     What do you consider are the **advantages** of assisting staff with a career development plan?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5b.	The following are some objections people have to assisting staff with career development.  To what extent do you see these reponses as being representative of your organisation?

Please rate the options listed above on a 1-9 scale (1 = most valid reason;  9 = least valid reason).

RATING

i)	Fear we'll train people up only to have them leave;  ☐
ii)	It's not worth it in terms of $?;  ☐
iii)	Staff may become too challenging and hard to handle;  ☐
iv)	CEOs / Managers might be found wanting;  ☐
v)	Staff may become more dissatisfied;  ☐
vi)	Fear of staff developing beyond the role of their superiors and becoming "uppity";  ☐
vii)	Time – they'll exhaust themselves and not put as much into their work;  ☐
viii)	We (the organisation) do it for them through on-the-job training and internal courses.  We give them what they need;  ☐
ix)	We can't afford to have staff members away from their role/team for 'x' period of time?;  ☐

5c.	Do you perceive any other **disadvantages** of assisting staff with a career development plan?	Yes / No

Please state: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6.  Do you personally have a career development plan?  Yes /No

6a. If yes, please state how you arrived at it?
    i.      Self (as employee)
    ii.     External agency
    iii.    Line manager
    iv.     Other (please specify)

    _____


7.  Whose responsibility is it in your organisation to set a career development plan?
    i.      Self (as employee)
    ii.     Organisation (line manager)
    iii.    Organisation (HR / Training & Development)
    iv.     Self in association with line manager
    v.      Other (please specify)

    _____


8.  Are there key people appointed within your organisation to ensure career development plans are implemented?      Yes / No


8a. If **yes**, who in your organisation carries that responsibility?

    i.      Self (as employee)
    ii.     Organisation (line manager)
    iii.    Organisation (HR / Training & Development)
    iv.     Self in association with line manager
    v.      Other (please specify) _____

    _____

8b.   If **no**, who in your organisation do you consider should carry that responsibility?

    i.     Self (as employee)
    ii.    Organisation (line manager)
    iii.   Organisation (HR / Training & Development)
    iv.   Self in association with line manager
    v.    Other (please specify) _____

_____

8c.   Please describe what training / support is provided for those responsible for implementing staff career development discussions and training?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8d.   Please describe your organisation's career development implementation process?

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Has your organisation considered using external career practitioners to assist in the implementation of an effective organisational career development programme?    Yes / No

9a. If **yes**, in what ways do you see the career practitioner could assist you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If your answer to Question 9 above is **no**, would you consider using an external career practitioner?          Yes / No

Please give reasons:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9b.     What do you consider the advantages and disadvantages to your **organisation** are / would be of using professional career practitioners?

**ADVANTANTGES**:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**DISADVANTAGES**:_____

_____

_____

_____

9c.    What do you consider the advantages and disadvantages to the **individua**l are / would be of using professional career practitioners?

**ADVANTAGES**:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**DISADVANTAGES**:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire.  Please return it to Claire Pearce in the attached self-addressed envelope.**

If you need more room to answer the questions, please do so on this sheet.

| Question Number | |
|---|---|
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**Appendix 2:**

Dear

# RESEARCH

# CONTRIBUTOR

Your organisation has agreed that your organisation be involved in research on career development issues within a variety of organisations.

I am undertaking this research as part of my Professional Development paper in the Diploma Of Career Counsellingthrough Wellington Institute of Technology.

The topic for this research is

## "INVESTMENT OR LIABILITY:

### HOW ORGANISATIONS VIEW & IMPLEMENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT".

The research will provide insight into attitudes surrounding career development, the specific challenges organisations have in developing their staff, how career development is viewed in relation to wider organisational strategic direction and the role of external career consultants to organisations.

A copy of the results of this research will be made available to your organisation.

The attached questionnaire is voluntary and confidential, and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.  Please return in the self-addressed envelope by [date]

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me:

**Claire Pearce**
**Email:** clandypearce@xtra.co.nz
**Phone:** (021) 397-047

Yours sincerely,

**Claire Pearce**

**Appendix 3:**

# CONSENT   TO   PARTICIPATE:

## TITLE:

### Investment or Liability:
How Organisations View & Implement Career Development

## RESEARCHER:                    Claire Pearce

I have been given and understood an explanation of this project.  I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.  I understand that I may withdraw myself, or any information I have provided, from the project (before data collection is completed) without giving reason.

I understand that my identity and the identity of my organisation will be kept confidential to the researcher and to the Weltec lecturer supervising the project.

I agree to take part in this research.

I agree to be interviewed to clarify any points raised as a result of the questionnaire if necessary.  I agree to the interview being recorded.

## SIGNED: _____

## NAME:  (Please print clearly)
_____

## DATE: _____

**Please sign and post with the completed questionnaire to:**
**Claire Pearce, PO Box 10950, Wellington – marked "private and confidential".**

**Appendix 4:**

Comments from one respondent, a line manager, that recorded there was no link, made the following comments:

- "Career planning only went as far as succession planning";

- "No formal analysis of career planning for staff undertaken";

- "It was more a case of ensuring no-one was indispensable and identifying those staff who you perceived to have potential";

- "Staff would be provided with training for the job at hand";

- "Performance appraisal process asked staff where they wished to be in 1 year and in 5 years. Efforts to do anything with the longer- range information was all ad-hoc, or down to your energy as a manager";

- "There is nothing I'm aware of that says our strategic objective is to ensure we have xxx skills and skillsets, so please encourage etc."

**Appendix 5**

HR & line manager responses describing their organisation's financial policy on

staff career development.

*HR Managers:*

- One respondent indicated "there was no financial policy";

- One respondent referred only to internal training which "has no cost associated with it";

- One respondent indicated the organisation had set aside funding for "across-the-board skill development, a contestable scholarship programme, a $500p/a allowance for training initiated by the employee which, while it can reflect personal interests, must be approved by manager";

- Within one organisation, "each division provides a budget for staff training";

- One respondent said their "organisation sets aside 3% of their annual budget for training that incurs a cost";

- In one organisation, "part of the training and development budget can be used for external advice programmes, provision of study leave, or may be used to assist staff who need to acquire skills in order to make their next career move".

*Line Managers:*

- One line manager indicated, "1% of their divisional income annually was dedicated to staff career development";

- One line manager referred to a "certain percentage of payroll costs".

**Appendix 6:**

Additional tools used by organisations as part of their career development

programmes include:

- Web-based university
- Career planning assessment
- Professional & personal coaching
- Feedback (formal & informal)
- Mentoring programme
- External career assistance to address poor performance issues
- Informal identification of staff with potential for scholarship pgme
- Conferences / seminars, etc.
- Industry training (ITOs)
- Audit assessments completed following internal training
- Overseas study attachments / exchanges
- Secondments
- Circulation of professional journals
- Quarterly review of PDPs.
- Peer review system
- CV database

- Job matrices
- Short-term projects / assignments
- Horizontal moves within org.
- Internal job posting
- Training courses for specific needs
- Cross-train / multi-skill staff
- External career assistance for redundancy situations
- Study groups
- Recognition through certification of in-house training
- Special interest group sessions
- Working parties / committees
- 360° development & review process
- Staff library
- Coaching / mentoring of junior staff members by senior members

**Appendix 7:**

*Advantages* of assisting staff with career development plans.

| HR MANAGER RESPONSES | LINE MANAGER RESPONSES |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>Minimizes the chances of unrealistic expectations</li><li>Maximises the potential for individuals</li><li>People become aware early of their 'fit' with the organisation</li><li>Encourage growth of the individuals within the organisation</li><li>Quality: training leads to greater skills & knowledge & higher-quality inputs</li><li>External credibility: a higher qualified workforce impresses clients & reviewing authorities</li><li>Morale: people love to see their colleagues succeeding</li><li>Staff feel great if they're achieving</li><li>We get the benefit of more competent staff</li><li>As we pay modest salaries / wages, good access to development opportunities is one benefit we can offer that helps to retain staff</li><li>Increased motivation</li><li>Ability to do job better</li><li>Succession</li><li>Achieve organisation's objectives</li><li>Strive for excellence in the field</li><li>When organisation assists, individuals feel understood, noticed and valued</li><li>Improve reputation of organisation as "employer of choice"</li><li>When you want to retain staff, you have a better chance if you know what development opportunities to offer them to fit with their career aspirations.</li></ul> | <ul><li>Supports company reputation as being an "employer of choice"</li><li>Increases business opportunities for its customers and the company</li><li>Lower staff turnover</li><li>Less stress for staff and line manager</li><li>As individuals grow, they offer more to the job</li><li>Happy staff = happy environment</li><li>Empowers staff to want to do more for themselves</li><li>Enthusiasm grows, which becomes infectious to other staff</li><li>Job satisfaction</li><li>Increased promotion prospects</li><li>Medium-long term employment</li><li>Increased feelings of self-worth</li><li>Often the best way to get skilled staff</li><li>Well managed programme will assist in making staff more skilled and adapted to changing requirements of work</li><li>Helps to ensure you're "growing" the skills needed in the organisation</li><li>Keeps staff challenged and busy</li><li>Succession planning</li><li>An alternative to paying higher salaries.</li></ul> |

**Appendix 8:**

Additional disadvantages perceived by HR and line managers are listed in the

table below:

| *HR Managers* | *Line Managers* |
|---|---|
| • "Confusion over current role"; <br><br> • "It may not be possible to deliver on the new expectations a qualified employee / employer might have, eg. roles that use their new skills"; <br><br> • "Our dilemma is that by doing this, we actually equip people to be better placed to leave us". | • "Supervisors don't understand the connection between skills, training, education and a higher performing individual"; <br><br> • "Might exceed budgeted boundaries"; <br><br> • "If plan creates expectations that the organisation is unable to realistically meet, then the outcome can and will be frustration and departure.  Therefore programmes need to be tailored to the expectations and limitations of the organisation for which they work"; <br><br> • "Better skill set and / or experience increases marketability & perhaps leads staff to looking around for better paid jobs"; <br><br> • "I have only a certain vision of what is available or where a person's strength could lead.  It tends to be confined to my area of knowledge"; <br><br> • "Can cause dissatisfaction if they are placed in positions where they can't apply that training". |

**Appendix 9:**

HR manager and line manager responses describing what training / support is provided for those responsible for implementing staff career development discussions and training.

| *HR Managers* | *Line Managers* |
|---|---|
| • On-line training via performance management process;<br><br>• None;<br><br>• Line manager can approach GM or HR manager for advice;<br><br>• "In-service training". HR provide training in topics related to managing staff & access to external agencies as required;<br><br>• T & D co-ordinator works closely with HR, but our managers are "trained to be responsible managers";<br><br>• Little at present. Need to do more. Assume inconsistency across managers at present in skill & way it's done. | • On-the-job training provided by experienced line managers;<br><br>• Staff training manuals, peer support group & external training;<br><br>• Appropriate external training provided if enough need it;<br><br>• Patchy, lacking;<br><br>• Nothing. Can get support from HR on process. |

**Appendix 10:**

The Advantages to the Organisation of using career practitioners are tabled

below:

| *HR Managers* | *Line Managers* |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>Objectivity and competence</li><li>Sole focus (not distracted by other issues)</li><li>Access to a variety of tools unrelated to an organisation</li><li>Give all staff the opportunity to grow to increase organisations efficiency & productivity</li><li>Focussing / assisting staff who have career dissatisfaction or are facing career change</li><li>Providing motivational focus for more career-oriented staff who want to feel they are gaining from their work with the organisation</li><li>Line managers who are aware of their staff's career goals are fore-warned of likely departures and have opportunities to prevent with work challenges or succession planning</li><li>Perhaps a 'Hawthorne Effect' from the attention from careers advice, if line manager was involved & interested & provided on-the-job career development opportunities such as projects in line with staff's identified career development goals</li><li>Might ensure more consistent attention is paid to career development</li><li>Might increase sense of feeling valued if more concrete career strategy in place and followed through, with wider options offered than we tend to have time to think of.</li></ul> | <ul><li>To establish a customized programme which can be used on an on-going basis and leveraged across other areas of the organisation</li><li>Better developed & performing employees</li><li>More professionalism</li><li>Better staff selection decision for promotion</li><li>Independent outside view</li><li>Less bias</li><li>May be more objective about which direction to take</li><li>Professional delivery</li><li>No inside influence</li><li>Employee feels looked after</li><li>Professional – they'll be trained in asking the right questions to work out skillsets vs. opportunities and capabilities. They'll also have good knowledge of the industry and have a broader perspective</li><li>Support staff moving on as a result of poor performance</li><li>Objectivity might be greater than an internal advisor</li><li>May provide a fresh perspective</li><li>Motivated staff lead to possibly high retention if couched as development of wider role rather than upward development</li></ul> |

**Appendix 11:**

The disadvantages to the Organisation of using career practitioners are tabled

below:

| *HR Managers* | *Line Managers* |
|---|---|
| • Objectivity – lack of organisational focus<br><br>• Small organisation so can't always provide the internal career development opportunities a professional staff member might identify<br><br>• Line managers might abrogate their responsibility for career management mentoring to the careers advisor<br><br>• External advisor is unlikely to be as well briefed as an internal advisor on the organisation's opportunities, needs, internal politics, etc.<br><br>• Not necessarily aligned with strategic direction | • Not knowing your business – not being able to ensure long-term take up of recommendations<br><br>• Might channel staff away from current focus<br><br>• May set targets outside financial limits<br><br>• Time constraints (within the working week)<br><br>• Career practitioners won't know the details of the company or how it ties together. They should be privy to strategic objectives, culture, etc.<br><br>• Potentially losing good staff<br><br>• Would rather have the expertise in-house as part of a HR policy section. |